

UNCLASSIFIED

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

Release ( ) Excise ( ) De

Exemption(s)

Classify: ( ) In Part ( ) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Reason

94TH RUESBA

DE RUEBAS #0215 0161445

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R 161410Z JAN 79

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5001

INFO RUESBA/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 3978

RUESDO/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 1540

BT

ASUNCION 0215

E.O. 12065: GDS 1/16/85 (KAY, ANDREW R.)OR-P

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: FIVE PRISONERS REMAIN

REF: 78 ASUNCION 5524

1. IN 1977 THERE WERE MORE THAN 600 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN PARAGUAY. TODAY THERE ARE ONLY FIVE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CLOSED EMBASCADA PRISON, THE FACILITY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO STOPPED ARRESTING POLITICAL ENEMIES. THE JULY 1978 LAINO CASE IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION SINCE JANUARY 1978. OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE TOLD US THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT "DISCOVERED" A COMMUNIST OR TERRORIST CONSPIRACY DURING NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER RESULTING IN A ROUND UP OF REGIME OPPONENTS.

2. (U) THE FIVE REMAINING PRISONERS AREA:

A. POLITICAL PRISONERS:

(1) SEVERO ACOSTA ARANDA - DETAINED APRIL 17, 1964; ALLEGEDLY A COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) REVOLUTIONARY.

(2) VIRGILIO BAREIRO - DETAINED AUGUST 10, 1964; ALLEGEDLY A MEMBER OF PCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

(3) AMILCAR SANTUCHO - DETAINED MAY 16, 1976; ARGENTINE CITIZEN ALLEGEDLY LEADER OF ERP TERRORIST GROUP. HAS UN REFUGEE STATUS.

B. COMMON CRIMES:

(1) ESCOLASTICO OVANDO - SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IMPRISONMENT ON A MURDER CHARGE BY MILITARY TRIBUNAL DEC 17, 1962. NOT RELEASED ON COMPLETING SENTENCE AND PRESENLY HELD UNDER ARTICLE 79 OF CONSITITUION.

(2) GUNTHER OTTO PORTENSCHLAG - DETAINED JANUARY 18, 1977 FOR INVOLVEMENT IN A MURDER CASE. AUSTRIAN NATIONAL DETAINED UNDER ARTICLE 79 WITHOUT CHARGES.

3. COMMENT: THIS DRAMATIC DECREASE CAME ABOUT PRIMARILY IN RESPONSE TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHT'S POLICY AND ASSOCIATED INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRESSURES. IN THE EMBASSY'S OPINION THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IS NOW SO SMALL AS NOT TO BE AN APPROPRIATE SUBJECT OF CONCERN BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS. THE USG SHOULD SHIFT ITS EFFORTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA TO OTHER PROBLEMS; E.G. LIFTING THE STATE OF SIEGE, DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, AND LEAVE THE MAIN EFFORT TO OBTAIN THE FEW REMAINING PRISONERS' RELEASE TO INTERNATIONAL AND PARAGUAYAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS.

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DAO			FAS	
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